

Along with J.G. Fichte and, at least in his early work, F.W.J. von Schelling, Hegel (1770–1831) belongs to the period of German idealism in the decades following Kant. The most systematic of the post-Kantian idealists, Hegel attempted, throughout his published writings as well as in his lectures, to elaborate a comprehensive and systematic philosophy from a purportedly logical starting point. He is perhaps most well-known for his teleological account of history, an account that was later taken over by Marx and “inverted” into a materialist theory of an historical development culminating in communism. While *idealist philosophies* in Germany post-dated Hegel (Beiser 2014), the movement commonly known as German idealism effectively ended with Hegel’s death. Certainly since the revolutions in logical thought from the turn of the twentieth century, the logical side of Hegel’s thought has been largely forgotten, although his political and social philosophy and theological views have continued to find interest and support. Since the 1970s, however, a degree of more general philosophical interest in Hegel’s systematic thought and its logical basis has been revived.

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1. Life, Work, and Influence

Born in 1770 in Stuttgart, Hegel spent the years 1788–1793 as a student in nearby Tübingen, studying first philosophy, and then theology, and forming friendships with fellow students, the future great romantic poet Friedrich Hölderlin (1770–1843) and Friedrich von Schelling (1775–1854), who, like Hegel, would become one of the major figures of the German philosophical scene in the first half of the nineteenth century. These friendships clearly had a major influence on Hegel’s philosophical development, and for a while the intellectual lives of the three were closely intertwined.

After graduation Hegel worked as a tutor for families in Bern and then Frankfurt, where he was reunited with Hölderlin. Until around 1800, Hegel devoted himself to developing his ideas on religious and social themes, and seemed to have envisaged a future for himself as a type of modernising and reforming educator, in the image of figures of the German Enlightenment such as

Lessing and Schiller. Around the turn of the century, however, under the influence of Hölderlin and Schelling, his interests turned more to issues arising from the critical philosophy initiated by Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) and developed by J.G. Fichte (1762–1814). In the 1790s the University of Jena had become a center for the development of critical philosophy due to the presence of K.L. Reinhold (1757–1823) and then Fichte, who taught there from 1794 until his dismissal on the grounds of atheism at the end of the decade. By that time, Schelling, who had first been attracted to Jena by the presence of Fichte, had become an established figure at the university. In 1801 Hegel moved to Jena to join Schelling, and in same year published his first philosophical work, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, in which he argued that Schelling had succeeded where Fichte had failed in the project of systematizing and thereby completing Kant's transcendental idealism. In 1802 and 1803 Hegel and Schelling worked closely together, editing the *Critical Journal of Philosophy*, and on the basis of this association Hegel came to be dogged for many years by the reputation of being a "mere" follower of Schelling (who was five years his junior).

By late 1806 Hegel had completed his first major work, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (published 1807), which showed a divergence from his earlier, seemingly more Schellingian, approach. Schelling, who had left Jena in 1803, interpreted a barbed criticism in the *Phenomenology's* preface as aimed at him, and their friendship abruptly ended. The occupation of Jena by Napoleon's troops as Hegel was completing the manuscript restricted the activities of the university and Hegel departed. Now without a university appointment he worked for a short time, apparently very successfully, as an editor of a newspaper in Bamberg, and then from 1808–1815 as the headmaster and philosophy teacher at a gymnasium (high school) in Nuremberg. During his time at Nuremberg he married and started a family, and wrote and published his *Science of Logic*. In 1816 he managed to return to his university career by being appointed to a chair in philosophy at the University of Heidelberg, but shortly after, in 1818, he was offered and took up the chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin, the most prestigious position in the German philosophical world. In 1817, while in Heidelberg he published the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, a systematic work in which an abbreviated version of the earlier *Science of Logic* (the *Encyclopaedia Logic* or *Lesser Logic*) was followed by the application of its principles to the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit. In 1821 in Berlin Hegel published his major work in political philosophy, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, based on lectures given at Heidelberg but ultimately grounded in the section of the *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Spirit* dealing with *objective spirit*. During the following ten years up to his death in 1831 Hegel enjoyed celebrity at Berlin, and published subsequent versions of the *Encyclopaedia*. After his death versions of his lectures on philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, aesthetics, and the history of philosophy were published.

After Hegel's death, Schelling, whose reputation had long since been eclipsed by that of Hegel, was invited to take up the chair at Berlin, reputedly because the government of the day had wanted to counter the influence that Hegelian philosophy had exerted on a generation of students. Since the early period of his collaboration with Hegel, Schelling had become more religious in his philosophising and criticised the rationalism of Hegel's philosophy. During this time of Schelling's tenure at Berlin, important forms of later critical reaction to Hegelian philosophy developed. Hegel himself had been a supporter of progressive but non-revolutionary politics, but his followers divided into factions broadly groupable as those of the left, right and centre (Toews 1985); from the *left*, Karl Marx was to develop his own purported scientific approach to society and history which appropriated many Hegelian ideas into a *materialistic* outlook. (Later, especially in reaction to orthodox Soviet versions of Marxism, many so-called Western Marxists re-incorporated further Hegelian elements back into their forms of Marxist philosophy.) Many of Schelling's own criticisms of Hegel's rationalism found their way into subsequent *existentialist* thought, especially *via* the writings of Kierkegaard, who had attended Schelling's lectures. Furthermore, the interpretation Schelling offered of Hegel during these years itself helped to shape subsequent generations' understanding of Hegel, contributing to the orthodox or traditional understanding of Hegel as a metaphysical thinker in the pre-Kantian dogmatic sense.

In academic philosophy, Hegelian idealism had seemed to collapse dramatically after 1848 and the failure of the revolutionary movements of that year, but underwent a revival in both Great Britain and the United States in the last decades of the nineteenth century. In Britain, where philosophers such as T.H. Green and F.H. Bradley had developed metaphysical ideas which they related back to Hegel's thought, Hegel came to be one of the main targets of attack by the founders of the emerging "analytic" movement, Bertrand Russell and G.E. Moore. For Russell, the revolutionary innovations in logic starting in the last decades of the nineteenth century with the work of Frege and Peano had destroyed Hegel's metaphysics by overturning the Aristotelian logic on which, so Russell claimed, it was based, and in line with this dismissal, Hegel came to be seen within the analytic movement as an historical figure of little genuine philosophical interest. To some degree, analogous things could be said of Hegel's reception from within the twentieth-century phenomenological tradition that developed in continental Europe, but although marginalized within such core areas of mainstream academic philosophy, Hegel nevertheless continued to be a figure of interest within other philosophical movements such as existentialism and Marxism. In France, a version of Hegelianism came to influence a generation of thinkers, including Jean Hyppolite, Jean-Paul Sartre and the psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan, largely through the lectures of Alexandre Kojève. However, a later generation of French philosophers coming to prominence in the 1960s tended to react against Hegel in ways analogous to those in which early analytic philosophers had reacted against the Hegel who had influenced their predecessors. In Germany, having lapsed in the second half of the nineteenth century, interest in Hegel was revived at the turn of the twentieth with the historical work of Wilhelm Dilthey, and important Hegelian elements were incorporated within the approaches of thinkers of the Frankfurt School, such as Theodor Adorno, and later, Jürgen Habermas, as well as within the

Heidegger-influenced *hermeneutic* approach of H.-G. Gadamer. In Hungary, similar Hegelian themes were developed by Georg Lukács and later thinkers of the Budapest School. In the 1960s the German philosopher Klaus Hartmann developed what was termed a *non-metaphysical* interpretation of Hegel which, together with the work of Dieter Henrich and others, played an important role in the revival of interest in Hegel in academic philosophy in the second half of the century. Within English-speaking philosophy, the final quarter of the twentieth century saw something of a revival of serious interest in Hegel's philosophy with important works appearing such as those by H.S. Harris, Charles Taylor, Robert Pippin and Terry Pinkard in North America, and Stephen Houlgate and Robert Stern in Great Britain. By the close of the twentieth century, even within core logico-metaphysical areas of analytic philosophy, a number of individuals such as Robert Brandom and John McDowell had started to take Hegel seriously as a significant modern philosopher, although generally within analytic circles a favorable reassessment of Hegel has still a long way to go.

2. Hegel's Philosophy

Hegel's own pithy account of the nature of philosophy given in the *Preface* to his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* captures a characteristic tension in his philosophical approach and, in particular, in his approach to the nature and limits of human cognition. "Philosophy", he says there, "is its own time comprehended in thoughts" (PR: 21).

On the one hand we can clearly see in the phrase "its own time" the suggestion of an historical or cultural conditionedness and variability which applies even to the highest form of human cognition, philosophy itself. The contents of philosophical knowledge, we might suspect, will come from the historically changing contents of its cultural context. On the other, there is the hint of such contents being raised to some higher level, presumably higher than other levels of cognitive functioning such as those based in everyday perceptual experience, for example, or those characteristic of other areas of culture such as art and religion. This higher level takes the form of conceptually articulated *thought*, a type of cognition commonly taken as capable of having purportedly eternal contents (think of Plato and Frege, for example, who both have the truths of mathematics in mind). In line with such a conception, Hegel sometimes referred to the task of philosophy as that of recognising *the concept* (*Der Begriff*) in the mere representations (*Vorstellungen*) of everyday life.

This antithetical combination within human cognition of the temporally-conditioned and the eternal, a combination which reflects a broader conception of the human being as what Hegel describes elsewhere as a "finite-infinite", (SL: 114) has led to Hegel being regarded in different ways by different types of philosophical readers. For example, an historically-minded pragmatist like Richard Rorty, distrustful of all claims or aspirations to the so-called God's-eye view, could praise Hegel as a philosopher who had introduced this historically reflective dimension into philosophy (and set it on the characteristically romantic path which has predominated in modern continental philosophy) but who had unfortunately still remained bogged down in the remnants of the Platonistic idea of the search for ahistorical truths (Rorty 1982). Those adopting such an approach to Hegel tend to have in mind the (relatively) young author of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* and have tended to dismiss as "metaphysical" later and more systematic works like the *Science of Logic*. In contrast, the British Hegelian movement at the end of the nineteenth century tended to ignore the *Phenomenology* and the more historicist dimensions of his thought, and found in Hegel a systematic metaphysician whose *Logic* provided the basis for a definitive philosophical ontology. This latter traditional *metaphysical* view of Hegel dominated Hegel reception for most of the twentieth century, but from the 1980s came to be challenged by scholars who offered an alternative non-metaphysical, post-Kantian view. By "non-metaphysical" these thinkers had in mind metaphysics in the sense that Kant had been critical of, a point sometimes missed by critics. But in turn, this post-Kantian reading has been challenged by a *revised metaphysical* view, critical of the purported *over-assimilation* of Hegel to Kant by the post-Kantians. In the revised metaphysical view, appeal is often made to Aristotelian or Spinozist conceptual realist features of Hegel's thought, as well as to features of recent analytic metaphysics.

Before surveying these competing views, however, something needs to be said about the confusing term "idealism", and about the variety of idealism that is characteristic of Hegel and other German idealists.

2.1 Background: Idealism as understood in the German tradition

"Idealism" is a term that had been used sporadically by Leibniz and his followers to refer to a type of philosophy that was opposed to *materialism*. Thus, for example, Leibniz had contrasted *Plato* as an idealist with *Epicurus* as a materialist. The opposition to materialism here, together with the fact that in the English-speaking world the Irish philosopher and clergyman George Berkeley (1685–1753) is often taken as a prototypical idealist, has given rise to the assumption that idealism is necessarily an immaterialist doctrine. This assumption, however, is mistaken. With the possible exception of Leibniz, the idealism of the Germans was not committed to the type of doctrine found in Berkeley according to which immaterial minds, both infinite (God's) and finite (those of humans), were the ultimately real entities, with *apparently* material things to be understood as reducible to *states* of such minds—that is, to ideas in the sense meant by the British empiricists.

As Leibniz's use of Plato to exemplify idealism suggests, idealists in the German tradition tended to hold to the reality or objectivity of ideas in the Platonic sense, and for Plato, it would seem, such

ideas were not conceived as *in* any mind at all—not even the mind of Plato’s *god*. The type of picture found in Berkeley was only to be found in certain late antique Platonists and, especially, early Christian Platonists like Saint Augustine, Bishop of Hippo. But especially for the German idealists like Hegel, Plato’s philosophy was understood through the lenses of more Aristotelian varieties of neo-Platonism, which pictured the thoughts of a divine mind as immanent in matter, and not as contained in some purely immaterial or spiritual mind. It thus had features closer to the more pantheistic picture of divine thought found in Spinoza, for example, for whom matter and mind were attributes of the one substance.

Even for Leibniz, whose later monadological metaphysics was perhaps closer to Berkeley’s immaterialist philosophy, an opposition to materialism didn’t necessarily imply immaterialism. Leibniz had resisted Descartes’ postulation of distinct spiritual and material substances, treating corporeal bodies as inseparable combinations of form and matter after the manner of Aristotle. The materialists to which he was opposed (mechanistic corpuscularists of his time) conceived of unformed matter as a type of self-subsistent substance, and it seems to have been *that* conception to which he was opposed, at least in some periods of his work, not the reality of matter *per se*. Leibniz’s combination of Platonic and Aristotelian notions played a role in the thought of the later idealists, giving their opposition to materialism its distinctive character. These anti-immaterialist features of the idealism of the Germans became more prominent in the post-Kantian period as they moved progressively away from the more subjectivistic features of Leibniz’s thought (Beiser 2002).

2.2 The *traditional* metaphysical view of Hegel’s philosophy

Given the understanding of Hegel that predominated at the time of the birth of analytic philosophy, together with the fact that early analytic philosophers were rebelling precisely against Hegelianism so understood, the interpretation of Hegel encountered in discussions within analytic philosophy is often that of the late nineteenth-century interpretation. In this picture, Hegel is seen as offering a metaphysico-religious view of God *qua* Absolute Spirit, as the ultimate reality that we can come to know through pure thought processes alone. In short, Hegel’s philosophy is treated as exemplifying the type of pre-critical or *dogmatic* metaphysics against which Kant had reacted in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, and as a return to a more religiously driven conception of philosophy to which Kant had been opposed.

There is much that can be found in Hegel’s writings that seems to support this view. In his lectures during his Berlin period one comes across claims such as the one that philosophy “has no other object but God and so is essentially rational theology” (Aes I: 101). Indeed, Hegel often seems to invoke imagery consistent with the types of neo-Platonic conceptions of the universe that had been common within Christian mysticism, especially in the German states, in the early modern period. The peculiarity of Hegel’s form of idealism, on this account, lies in his idea that the mind of God becomes actual only via its particularization in the minds of “his” finite material creatures. Thus, in our consciousness of God, we somehow serve to realize his *own* self-consciousness, and, thereby, his own perfection. In English-language interpretations, such a picture is effectively found in the work of Charles Taylor (1975) and Michael Rosen (1984), for example. With its dark mystical roots, and its overtly religious content, it is hardly surprising that the philosophy of Hegel so understood has rarely been regarded as a live option within the largely secular and scientific conceptions of philosophy that have been dominant in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

An important consequence of Hegel’s metaphysics, so understood, concerns history and the idea of historical development or progress, and it is as an advocate of an idea concerning the logically-necessitated teleological course of history that Hegel is most often derided. To critics, such as Karl Popper in his popular post-war *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945), Hegel had not only advocated a disastrous political conception of the state and the relation of its citizens to it, a conception prefiguring twentieth-century totalitarianism, but he had also tried to underpin such advocacy with dubious theo-logico-metaphysical speculations. With his idea of the development of *spirit* in history, Hegel is seen as literalising a way of talking about different cultures in terms of their spirits, of constructing a developmental sequence of epochs typical of nineteenth-century ideas of linear historical progress, and then enveloping this story of human progress in terms of one about the developing self-consciousness of the cosmos-God itself.

As the bottom line of such an account concerned the evolution of states of a mind (God’s), such an account is clearly an idealist one, but not in the sense, say, of Berkeley. The pantheistic legacy inherited by Hegel meant that he had no problem in considering an objective *outer* world beyond any particular subjective mind. But this objective world itself had to be understood as conceptually informed: it was *objectified* spirit. Thus in contrast to Berkeleian *subjective* idealism it became common to talk of Hegel as incorporating the *objective* idealism of views, especially common among German historians, in which social life and thought were understood in terms of the conceptual or spiritual structures that informed them. But in contrast to both forms of idealism, Hegel, according to this reading, postulated a form of *absolute* idealism by including both subjective life and the objective cultural practices on which subjective life depended within the dynamics of the development of the self-consciousness and self-actualisation of God, the *Absolute Spirit*.

Despite this seemingly dominant theological theme, Hegel was still seen by many as an important precursor of other more characteristically secular strands of modern thought such as existentialism and Marxist materialism. Existentialists were thought of as taking the idea of the finitude and historical and cultural dependence of individual subjects from Hegel, and as leaving out all

pretensions to the Absolute, while Marxists were thought of as taking the historical dynamics of the Hegelian picture but reinterpreting this in materialist rather than idealist categories. As for understanding Hegel himself, the traditional metaphysical view remained the dominant interpretative approach of Hegel scholars throughout much of the twentieth century. In the last quarter of the century, however, it came to be vigorously questioned, with a variety of interpreters putting forward very different accounts of the basic nature of Hegel's philosophical project. While a number of interpretations of Hegel have emerged during this period in an effort to acquit him of implausible metaphysico-theological views, one prominent tendency has been to stress the continuity of his ideas with the "critical philosophy" of Immanuel Kant.

2.3 The post-Kantian (sometimes called the non-metaphysical) view of Hegel

Least controversially, it is often claimed that either particular *works*, such as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, or particular *areas* of Hegel's philosophy, especially his ethical and political philosophy, can be understood as standing independently of the type of unacceptable metaphysical system sketched above. Thus it is commonly asserted that implicit within the metaphysical Hegel is an anti-metaphysical philosopher struggling to get out—one potentially capable of beating the critical Kant at his own game.

More controversially, one now finds it argued that the traditional picture is simply wrong at a more general level, and that Hegel, even in his systematic thought, was not committed to the bizarre, teleological *spirit monism* that has been traditionally attributed to him because he was free of the type of traditional metaphysical commitments that had been criticized by Kant. Prominent among such interpretations has been the so-called post-Kantian interpretation advanced by North American Hegel scholars Robert Pippin (1989, 2008, 2019) and Terry Pinkard (1994, 2000, 2012). From an explicitly analytic perspective, broadly similar views have been put forward by Robert Brandom (2002, 2014, 2019) and John McDowell (2006, 2018). Thus while the traditional view sees Hegel as exemplifying the very type of metaphysical speculation that Kant successfully criticised, the post-Kantian view regards him as both accepting and *extending* Kant's critique, ultimately turning it against the residual dogmatically metaphysical aspects of Kant's own philosophy.

In Hegel, the non-traditionalists argue, one can see the ambition to bring together the universalist dimensions of Kant's transcendental program with the culturally contextualist conceptions of his more historically and relativistically-minded contemporaries, resulting in his controversial conception of spirit, as developed in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. With this notion, it is claimed, Hegel was essentially attempting to answer the Kantian question of the conditions of rational human mindedness, rather than being concerned with giving an account of the developing self-consciousness of God. But while Kant had limited such conditions to formal abstractly conceived structures of the mind, Hegel extended them to include aspects of historically and socially determined forms of embodied human existence.

2.4 The *revised* metaphysical view of Hegel

Not surprisingly, the strong post-Kantian interpretation of Hegel has been resisted by defenders of the more traditional approach, who have argued against the plausibility of attempting to rehabilitate Hegel's philosophy by divesting it of any purportedly unacceptable metaphysical claims (see, for example, Beiser 2005 and Horstmann 2006). Proponents of the post-Kantian view, it is commonly said, are guilty of projecting onto Hegel views they would *like* to find there rather than what is actually to be found. However, the strong post-Kantian interpretation has *also* been challenged by a somewhat different version of the metaphysical reading by interpreters who, while recognizing the influence of Kant's critical philosophy of Hegel, emphasize Hegel's critique of Kant and affirm the irreducible role played by a form of metaphysics in Hegel's philosophy. Nevertheless, they share the post-Kantians' attempts to separate Hegel's views from the extravagant views traditionally ascribed to him and generally argue for the broad acceptability of Hegel's views from the perspective of the present. Here one tends to find interpreters attributing to Hegel some type of conceptual realism, sometimes appealing to contemporary *analytic* metaphysics for the legitimacy of metaphysics conceived as inquiry into the fundamental features or structures of the world itself. Among the interpreters advancing something like this *revised* metaphysical view might be counted Stephen Houlgate (2005b), Robert Stern (2002, 2009), Kenneth Westphal (2003), James Kreines (2006, 2008) and Christopher Yeomans (2012).

On a number of points, the proponents of the revised conceptual realist metaphysical interpretation will agree with advocates of the post-Kantian non-metaphysical approach. First, they tend to agree in dismissing much of the extravagant metaphysics traditionally ascribed to Hegel. Generally they don't find in Hegel the type of classical teleological spirit monism central to, say, Taylor's interpretation. Next, they stress the importance for Hegel of Kant's critique of metaphysics. Both think that Hegel took Kant's critique seriously, and in turn subjected that critique itself to a telling *meta-critique*, showing that Kant himself was not free from the sorts of ungrounded metaphysical assumptions he criticized in others. However, while the post-Kantians interpret Hegel's criticisms of Kant as suggesting that Hegel thereby realized or completed Kant's critical intention, creating a form of philosophizing purged of metaphysics, proponents of the revised metaphysical interpretation typically see his criticism of Kant as involving a rejection of Kant's anti-metaphysical attitude, and as reestablishing, on a new basis, a metaphysical program originally derived from Aristotle (e.g., Stern) or Spinoza (e.g., Houlgate).

While it is for the most part clear what sets both post-Kantians and conceptual realists against the traditional view, it is still not clear which issues dividing them are substantive and which are ultimately verbal. Brandom, for example, while often classed with the post-Kantians, also construes Hegel as a conceptual realist (Brandom 2019), while Redding, appealing to the earlier work of J. N. Findlay, attempts to combine the post-Kantian approach with what he calls an *actualist* rather than a realist interpretation of Hegel (Redding 2017). In recent work, both Pippin (2019) and Pinkard (2014), the major representatives of the post-Kantian position, have insisted that their own interpretations are compatible with many of the Aristotelian features of Hegel to which conceptual realists allude.

In relation to such debates it must be remembered that Kant himself was not critical of metaphysics *per se*. His claim was that existing (so-called dogmatic) metaphysics was in a state analogous to that in which, say, physics had been in before the scientific revolution of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rather than wanting to eliminate metaphysics, after the style, say, of Hume or the modern logical positivists, Kant had wanted to put metaphysics itself on a secure scientific basis analogous to what Galileo and Newton had achieved for physics. Thus the very idea of an *Hegelian metaphysics* is in no way straightforwardly incompatible with the project of a post-Kantian completion of Kant's critical program.

3. Hegel's Published Works

We may think of there being five different types of work that make up Hegel's published corpus. First, there are Hegel's two major stand-alone books written for publication already mentioned—*Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) and *Science of Logic* (1812–18). In the next category are works that were published at the time as *handbooks* for use in student teaching such as the *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* first published in 1817 while he was teaching at Heidelberg and subsequently revised and republished in 1827 and again in 1830, and *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, effectively an expansion of a section of the *Encyclopaedia* and published in 1820 after his move to Berlin. (Transcripts of his earlier lectures on this topic delivered in Heidelberg have also since been published.) Along with the *Encyclopaedia* and the *Philosophy of Right* might be added similar teaching-related writings from the Jena period, prepared as lectures but only published as such much later. The third major category is formed by posthumously published lecture courses from his time at the University of Berlin, which, after Hegel's death, were assembled by editors from his lecture notes and from student transcripts of the lectures as delivered—these include his lectures on the *Philosophy of Nature*, *Philosophy of Spirit*, *Philosophy of History*, *Aesthetics*, *Philosophy of Religion*, and *History of Philosophy*. Next might be considered various miscellaneous essays and short works published during his career, and finally we can count Hegel's early works, written in the period between his student years at Tübingen and his move to Jena, and predominantly on religious and political themes (ETW). Here we will restrict the discussion to the first three categories.

3.1 Books

3.1.1 *Phenomenology of Spirit*

The term “phenomenology” had been coined by the Swiss mathematician (and Kant correspondent) J.H. Lambert (1728–1777) in his *The New Organon* of 1764, and in a letter to Lambert, sent to accompany a copy of his Inaugural Dissertation (1770), Kant had proposed his own project of a “general phenomenology” as a necessary propaedeutic presupposed by the science of metaphysics. Such a phenomenology was meant to determine the “validity and limitations” of what he called the “principles of sensibility”, principles he had (he thought) shown in the accompanying work to be importantly different to those of conceptual thought. The term clearly suited Kant as he had distinguished the phenomena known through the faculty of sensibility from the noumena known purely conceptually. This envisioned phenomenology seems to coincide roughly with what he was to eventually describe as a *critique of pure reason*, although Kant's thought had gone through important changes by the time that he came to publish the work of that name (1781, second edition 1787). Perhaps because of this he never again used the term “phenomenology” for quite this purpose.

There is clearly some continuity between Kant's notion and Hegel's project. In a sense Hegel's phenomenology is a study of *phenomena* (although this is not a realm he would contrast with that of noumena) and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is likewise to be regarded as a type of propaedeutic to philosophy rather than an exercise *in* or work *of* philosophy. It is meant to function as an induction or education of the reader to the *standpoint* of purely conceptual thought from which philosophy can be done. As such, its structure has been compared to that of a *Bildungsroman* (educational novel), having an abstractly conceived protagonist—the bearer of an evolving series of so-called shapes of consciousness or the inhabitant of a series of successive phenomenal worlds—whose progress and set-backs the reader follows and learns from. Or at least this is how the work sets out: in the later sections the earlier series of shapes of consciousness becomes replaced with what seem more like configurations of human *social life*, and the work comes to look more like an account of interlinked forms of social existence and thought within which participants in such forms of social life conceive of themselves and the world. Hegel constructs a series of such shapes that maps onto the history of western European civilization from the Greeks to his own time.

The fact that this progression ends in the attainment of what Hegel refers to as Absolute Knowing, the standpoint from which real philosophy gets done, seems to support the traditionalist reading in which a triumphalist narrative of the growth of western civilization is combined with the theological

interpretation of God's self-manifestation and self-comprehension. When Kant had broached the idea of a phenomenological propaedeutic to Lambert, he himself had still believed in the project of a purely conceptual metaphysics achievable by the use of the regressive or *analytic* method, but this project conceived as an exercise in theoretical reason was just what Kant in his later critical philosophy had come to disavow. Traditional readers of Hegel thus see the *Phenomenology's telos* as attesting to Hegel's pre-Kantian (that is, pre-critical) outlook, and his embrace of the metaphysical project that Kant famously came to dismiss as illusory. Supporters of the *post-Kantian* interpretation of Hegel obviously interpret this work and its *telos* differently. For example, it has been argued (e.g., Pinkard 1994) that what this history tracks is the development of a type of social existence which enables a unique form of rationality, in that in such a society all dogmatic bases of thought have been gradually replaced by a system in which all claims become open to rational self-correction, by becoming exposed to demands for conceptually-articulated justifications. As Pinkard had pointed out in that work, this was a conception of the normatively structured practices of human reason found in the American pragmatist Wilfrid Sellars, the inspiration behind the Hegelian dimensions of analytic philosophers such as Willem deVries (1988), Robert Brandom and John McDowell.

Something of Hegel's phenomenological method may be conveyed by the first few chapters, which are perhaps among its more conventionally philosophical parts (Westphal 2009). Chapters 1 to 3 effectively follow a developmental series of distinct shapes of consciousness—jointly epistemological and ontological attitudes articulated by criteria which are, regarded from one direction, criteria for certain *knowledge*, and from the other, criteria for the nature of the *objects* of such knowledge. In chapter 1, the attitude of *Sense-certainty* takes immediately given perceptual simples—the sort of role played by the so-called sense-data of early twentieth-century analytic epistemology, for example, with which a subject is purportedly acquainted as *bare thises*—as the fundamental objects known. By following this form of consciousness's attempts to make these implicit criteria *explicit*, we are meant to appreciate that any such contents, even the apparently most immediate ones, are in fact grasped *conceptually*, and so, in Hegel's terminology, their reception is actually mediated by the concepts with which they are grasped. Hegel is clear that these contents are not merely qualitative simples that are immediately *apprehended*, but *comprehended* instances of the conceptual determination of singularity [*Einzelheit*] (Phen: §91). Such a simple *this*, then, can also be understood as an instance of what the Medievals discussed as *thisness*—a general *property* of an individual thing's being identical to itself. One might compare Hegel's point here to that expressed by Kant in his well known claim from *Critique of Pure Reason* (A51/B75), that *without* general concepts, *intuitions* (singular [*einzeln*] purportedly immediate mental representations), are *blind*. However, Hegel seems to want to make this point *without* relying on Kant's formal distinction *between* concepts and intuitions as different species of representation. The idea seems to be that for Hegel, *the same content* can play the roles played by both concepts and intuitions in Kant. (The lessons of this chapter have sometimes been likened to those of Wilfrid Sellars's famous criticism of the empiricist *myth of the given*.)

By the end of this chapter our protagonist consciousness (and by implication, we the audience to this drama) has learnt that the nature of consciousness cannot be as originally thought: rather than being immediate and singular, its contents must have some implicit universal (conceptual) aspect to them. The general *truth* that was learned about the apparent qualitative simples in Sense-certainty (that they were instances of generals) is now explicitly taken as the *truth of the object of Perception* (*Wahrnehmung*—in German this term having the connotations of taking (*nehmen*) to be true (*wahr*)). In contrast to the purported single object of Sense-certainty the object of Perception is taken as instantiating general properties: it is "a thing with many properties" (Phen: §112). But this can be conceived in a variety of ways: first, as a simple *bundle* of indifferent qualities (a picture associated with Plato), or as an underlying substrate *in which* these qualities somehow inhere (a picture associated with Aristotle). Predictably, problems will be revealed in these various different ways of thinking of the nature of those everyday objects of our experience.

As in the case of Sense-certainty, here in the case of Perception, by following the protagonist consciousness's efforts to make this implicit criterion explicit, we see how the criterion generates contradictions that eventually undermine it as a criterion for certainty. In fact, such collapse into a type of self-generated skepticism is typical of all the shapes we follow in the work, and there seems something inherently skeptical about such reflexive cognitive processes. But this is not the type of skepticism that is typical of early modern philosophy, such as that used by Descartes in his attempt to find some foundation of *indubitability* on which genuine knowledge can be built (Forster 1989). As is clear from his treatment of ancient philosophy in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel was attracted to the type of *dialectic* employed by Socrates in his efforts to get his interlocutors thinking about something beyond that given immediately in sensation (LHP II: 51), and implicit in the ancient form of skepticism that had been employed after Socrates (LHP II: 344). For Hegel, the ancient skeptics captured the skeptical moment of thought that is the means by which thought progresses *beyond* the particular categories that have given rise to contradictions. Just as in the way a new shape of thought, Perception, had been generated from the internal contradictions that emerged within Sense-certainty, the collapse of any given attitude will be accompanied by the emergence of some new implicit criterion that will be the basis of a new emergent attitude. In the case of Perception, the emergent new shape of consciousness, the Understanding, explored in Chapter 3, is a shape identified with the type of scientific cognition that, rather than remaining on the level of the perceived object, posits underlying *forces* involved in the production of the perceptual episode.

The transition from Chapter 3 to Chapter 4, The Truth of Self-Certainty, also marks a more general transition from Consciousness to *Self-consciousness*. It is in the course of Chapter 4 that we find

what is perhaps the most well-known part of the *Phenomenology*, the account of the *struggle of recognition* in which Hegel examines the inter-subjective conditions which he sees as necessary for any form of consciousness. This is a topic that had first been taken up by Alexandre Kojève (1969), and which has been appealed to in non-Kojèvean ways recently by a number of non-traditional interpreters in order to give a quite different accounts of Hegel's notion of *Spirit* (Honneth 1995; Ikäheimo and Laitinen 2011; Pippin 2008; Williams 1992, 1997).

Like Kant, Hegel thinks that one's capacity to be *conscious* of some external object as something distinct from oneself requires the reflexivity of *self-consciousness*, that is, it requires one's awareness of *oneself* as a subject *for whom* something distinct, the object, is presented *as known* (a result emerging in Chapter 3). Hegel goes beyond Kant, however, and expanding on an idea found in Fichte, makes this requirement dependent on one's recognition (or acknowledgment—*Anerkennung*) of *other* self-conscious subjects as self-conscious subjects *for whom* any object of consciousness will be thought as *also* existing. One's self-consciousness, in fact, will be dependent on one's recognition of those others as similarly recognizing *oneself* as a self-conscious subject. Such complex patterns of mutual recognition constituting *objective spirit* thereby provide the social matrix within which individual self-consciousnesses can exist as such. It is in this way that the *Phenomenology* can change course, the earlier tracking of shapes of individual consciousness and self-consciousness effectively coming to be replaced by the tracking of distinct patterns of mutual recognition between subjects—shapes of spirit—that forms the ground for the existence of those individual consciousnesses/self-consciousnesses.

It is thus that Hegel has effected the transition from a phenomenology of the individual's subjective mind to one of *objective spirit*, thought of as culturally distinct objective patterns of social interaction to be analysed in terms of the patterns of reciprocal recognition they embody. ("Geist" can be translated as either "mind" or "spirit", but the latter, allowing a more cultural sense, as in the phrase "spirit of the age" ("Zeitgeist"), seems a more suitable rendering for the title.) But this is only worked out in the text gradually. We—the reading or so-called phenomenological we—can see how particular shapes of self-consciousness, such as that of the other-worldly religious self-consciousness (Unhappy Consciousness) with which Chapter 4 ends, depend on certain institutionalised forms of mutual recognition, in this case one involving a priest who mediates between the self-conscious subject and that subject's God. But we are seeing this "from the outside", as it were: we still have to learn how actual self-consciousnesses could learn this of themselves. So we have to see how the protagonist self-consciousness could achieve this insight. It is to this end that we further trace the learning path of self-consciousness through the processes of *reason* (in Chapter 5) before objective spirit can become the explicit subject matter of Chapter 6 (*Spirit*).

Hegel's discussion of spirit starts from what he calls *Sittlichkeit* (translated as "ethical order" or "ethical substance"—"*Sittlichkeit*" being a nominalization from the adjectival (or adverbial) form "*sittlich*", "customary", from the stem "*Sitte*", "custom" or "convention".) Thus Hegel might be seen as adopting the viewpoint that since social life is ordered by customs we can approach the lives of those living in it in terms of the patterns of those customs or conventions themselves—the conventional practices, as it were, constituting specific, shareable *forms of life* made actual in the lives of particular individuals who had in turn *internalized* such general patterns in the process of acculturation. It is not surprising then that his account of spirit here starts with a discussion of religious and civic law. Undoubtedly it is Hegel's tendency to nominalise such abstract concepts in his attempt to capture the *concrete* nature of such patterns of conventional life, together with the tendency to then *personify* them (as in talking about spirit *becoming* self-conscious) that lends plausibility to the traditionalist understanding of Hegel. But for non-traditionalists it is not obvious that Hegel, in employing such phrases, is in any way committed to any metaphysical supra-individual conscious being or beings. To take an example, in the second section of the chapter on spirit, Hegel discusses human culture as the "world of self-alienated spirit". The idea seems to be that humans in society not only interact, but that they collectively create relatively enduring cultural products (repeatable stories, stageable dramas, and so forth) within which members of that society can recognise patterns of their own communal life as so reflected. We might find intelligible the metaphor that such products "hold up a mirror to society" within which "the society can regard itself", without thinking we are thereby committed to some supra-individual unitary mind achieving self-consciousness. Furthermore, such cultural products themselves provide conditions allowing individuals to adopt particular cognitive attitudes by appropriating their resources. Thus, for example, the capacity to adopt the type of objective viewpoint demanded by Kantian morality (discussed in the final section of *Spirit*)—the capacity to see things, as it were, from a detached or universal point of view—might be enabled by engaging with spirit's "alienations" such as the myths and rituals of a religion professing a universal scope.

We might think that if Kant had written Hegel's *Phenomenology* he would have ended it at Chapter 6 with the modern moral subject as the *telos* of the story. For Kant, the practical knowledge of morality, orienting one within the noumenal world, exceeds the scope of theoretical knowledge, which had been limited to phenomena. Hegel, however, thought that philosophy had to unify theoretical and practical knowledge, and so the *Phenomenology* has further to go. Again, this is seen differently by traditionalists and revisionists. For traditionalists, Chapters 7, Religion and 8, Absolute Knowing, testify to Hegel's disregard for Kant's critical limitation of theoretical knowledge to empirical experience. Revisionists, on the other hand, tend to see Hegel as furthering the Kantian critique into the very coherence of a conception of an *in-itself* reality that is beyond the limits of our theoretical (but not practical) cognition. Rather than understand absolute knowing as the achievement of some ultimate God's-eye view of everything, the philosophical analogue to the connection with God sought in religion, post-Kantian revisionists see it as the accession to a mode of

self-critical thought that has finally abandoned all non-questionable mythical *givens*, and which will only countenance reason-giving argument as justification. However we understand this, absolute knowing is the standpoint to which Hegel has hoped to bring the reader in this complex work. This is the standpoint of *science*, the standpoint from which philosophy proper commences, and it commences in Hegel's next book, the *Science of Logic*.

3.1.2 *Science of Logic*

Hegel's *Science of Logic* is divided into three books, dealing with the topics of *being*, *essence*, and *the concept*, which appeared in 1812, 1813, and 1816 respectively. For most of the 20th century it was not received with the enthusiasm that often marked the reception of *Phenomenology of Spirit*. First, as a work of *logic* most have regarded it as radically outdated and relying on an Aristotelian approach that was definitively surpassed in the later nineteenth century—a view promoted especially by Bertrand Russell in the early years of the twentieth. Thus many readers sympathetic to particular doctrines in Hegel have attempted, contrary to Hegel's insistence, to quarantine his philosophical approach to particular areas from it. Recently, this skepticism has started to change.

Some advocate that the *Science of Logic* be read as a first-order *ontological* doctrine (Doz 1987) or as a category theory that *simultaneously* represents structures of being and thought (Houlgate 2005b), and so as having very little to do with what has traditionally been known as logic. Others argue that in contrast to the project of formal (or general) logic, it is best understood as a version of what Kant had called "transcendental logic" (di Giovanni 2010). In this sense it should thereby be thought of as a successor to Kant's "transcendental deduction of the categories" in the *Critique of Pure Reason* in which Kant attempted to derive a list of those non-empirical concepts, the *categories*, which he believed to be presupposed by all empirical judgments made by finite, discursive knowers like ourselves. In short, taking the logic as a *category theory* opens up two general lines of interpretation: should the categories be understood as primarily *ontological* categories, as found in Aristotle, or as primarily categories revealing the necessary structure of *thought*, as in Kant? Those, such as the advocates of the revised metaphysical interpretation, interpreting Hegel as basically a metaphysician, typically stress the former, while post-Kantian interpreters typically stress the latter.

A glance at the table of contents of *Science of Logic* reveals the same triadic structuring among the categories or thought determinations discussed that has been noted among the shapes of consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. At the highest level of its branching structure there are the three books devoted to the doctrines of being, essence, and concept, while in turn, each book has three sections, each section containing three chapters, and so on. In general, each of these individual nodes deals with some particular category. In fact, Hegel's categorial triads appear to repeat Kant's own triadic way of articulating the categories in the Table of Categories (*Critique of Pure Reason* A80/B106) in which the third term in the triad in some way integrates the first two. (In Hegel's terminology, he would say that the first two were *sublated* [*aufgehoben*] in the third—while the first two are *negated* by the third, they continue to work within the context defined by it.) Hegel's later treatment of *the syllogism* found in Book 3, in which he follows Aristotle's own three-termed schematism of the syllogistic structure, repeats this triadic structure as does his ultimate analysis of its component concepts as the moments of universality, particularity, and singularity.

Reading into the first chapter of Book 1, Being, it is quickly seen that the *transitions* of the *Logic* broadly repeat those of the first chapters of the *Phenomenology*, now, however, as between the categories themselves rather than between conceptions of the respective *objects* of conscious experience. Thus, being is the thought determination with which the work commences because it *at first* seems to be the most immediate, fundamental determination that characterises any possible thought content at all. (In contrast, *being* in the *Phenomenology's* *Sense-certainty* chapter was described as the known *truth* of the purported immediate sensory given—the category that it was discovered to instantiate.) Whatever thought is about, that topic must in some sense *exist*. Like those purported simple *sensory givens* with which the *Phenomenology* starts, the category *being* looks to have no internal structure or constituents, but again in a parallel to the *Phenomenology*, it is the effort of thought to make this category explicit that both undermines it and brings about new ones. *Being* seems to be *both* immediate and simple, but it will show itself to be, in fact, *only* something in opposition to something else, *nothing*. The point seems to be that while the categories being and nothing seem both absolutely distinct and opposed, on reflection (and following Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles) they appear identical as no criterion can be invoked which differentiates them. The only way out of this paradox is to posit a third category within which they can coexist as *negated* (*Aufgehoben*) moments. This category is *becoming*, which saves thinking from paralysis because it accommodates both concepts. Becoming contains being and nothing in the sense that when something *becomes* it passes, as it were, from nothingness to being. But these contents cannot be understood apart from their contributions to the overarching category: this is what it is to be negated (*aufgehoben*) within the new category.

In general this is how the *Logic* proceeds: seeking its most basic and universal determination, thought posits a category to be reflected upon, finds then that this collapses due to a contradiction generated, like that generated by the category being, and so then seeks a further category with which to make retrospective senses of those contradictory categories. However, in turn the new category will generate some further contradictory negation and again the demand will arise for a *further* concept that can reconcile these opposed concepts by incorporating *them* as moments.

The method Hegel employs here, *determinate negation*, is often compared with Spinoza's principle that "all determination is negation", but while Hegel's is *related* to Spinoza's thought, it cannot be identified with or reduced to it. Spinoza's top-down determination starts with a single category (in his

case, *divine substance*) that is then progressively divided by the application of concepts—the model being Plato’s method of division in which a *genus* concept is divided into particular *species* by the presence or absence of some differentiating property. From Hegel’s point of view, however, this cannot capture *individuals* as other than *parts* of that greater whole—a metaphysical picture in relation to Spinoza he refers to as *acosmism*. So Hegel will balance *this* type of determination by negation, with a different type of negation modeled on that which holds between *incompatible properties* of some object (for example, red and blue as incompatible colors) and that is reflected in the *term negation* of Aristotle’s logic. This allows Hegel to go beyond the determination of something as *particular* (suggesting the part-whole relation) to a more robust sense of *singularity* [*Einzelheit*]*—*the sense of the pure *thisness* seen initially in the *Phenomenology*’s Sense-certainty chapter, the truth of which was then shown to be Aristotle’s idea of an individual thing’s substantial form in the Perception chapter. It is in terms of this category that we can think, along with Aristotle, of a thing having an underlying substrate within which properties inhere and which, unlike the properties themselves, cannot be thought in *general* terms, but only in terms of the category of *singularity*. And yet this will encounter a problem for the *determinacy* of this underlying substrate—*it* will have to find determining contrasts that allow *it* to be determinately conceived. (In Book 2 of the *Logic* we will learn that the category of singularity will rely on particularity just as particularity has been shown to rely on singularity. Singular substrates or “essences” can only be known in relation to the general properties that constitute their appearances.)

Attempting to unravel the intricacies of the patterns of dependence between such categories will be task of this mammoth work, but here a general point might be made. If Hegel’s thought here is considered to be, like Spinoza’s, *holistic*, it is only so at a higher level of abstraction, such that these determinations of *singularity*, *particularity* and *universality* cannot themselves be understood in isolation from each other but only via their complex interactions. Hegel only *explicitly* explores the details of the interactions of these determinations of conceptuality in his discussion of judgments and syllogisms in Book 3, The Doctrine of Concept, suggesting that concerns of logic as traditionally conceived are not as irrelevant to the *Science of Logic* as often thought. However, the general point separating his approach from that of Spinoza clearly emerges earlier on. Determinate negation is not Spinoza’s principle as Spinoza’s presupposes a whole that *precedes* its parts, and that all *negations* are negations of something that is primitively *positive*. In contrast, Hegel’s negations will be negations of determinations that are *already* to be conceived as *themselves* negations.

The other basic methodological principle of the *Logic* will be that this categorical infrastructure of thought is able to be unpacked using *only* the resources available to thought itself: the capacity of thought to make its contents determinate (in a way somewhat like what Leibniz had thought of as making clear but confused ideas clear and distinct), and its capacity to be consistent and avoid contradiction. Again, for some readers, this makes Hegel’s logic akin to Kant’s transcendental logic that, rather than treating the pure form of thought abstracted from *all* content, treats thought as already possessing a certain type of self-generated content, (in Kant’s terminology, “transcendental content”) that is presupposed by the subsequent acquisition of all *empirical* content. But if Hegel’s is akin to Kant’s transcendental logic, it has clear differences to it as well. For Kant, transcendental logic was the logic governing the thought of finite thinkers like ourselves, whose cognition was constrained by the necessity of applying general discursive concepts to the singular contents given in sensory intuitions, and he contrasted this with the thought of a type of thinker not so constrained—God—a thinker whose thought could directly grasp the world in a type of intellectual intuition. While opinions divide as to how Hegel’s approach to logic relates to that of Kant, it is important to grasp that for Hegel logic is not simply a science of the form of our thoughts. It is also a science of actual *content* as well, and as such has an ontological dimension.

The thought determinations of Book 1 lead eventually into those of Book 2, The Doctrine of Essence. Naturally the logical structures and processes implicit in essence-thinking are more developed than those of being-thinking. Crucially, the contrasting pair essence and appearance of Essence-logic allow the thought of some underlying reality that manifests itself *through* a different overlying appearance, in the way that the *forces* posited by the operations of *the Understanding* (explored in the *Phenomenology*’s Chapter 3) are grasped through the appearances they explain. In contrast, the categories of Being-logic seem to govern thought processes that are restricted to qualitative phenomena and their co-ordinations. But distinction between *essence* and *appearance* must itself instantiate the relation of determinate negation, and the metaphysical tendency to think of reality as made up of some underlying substrates in contrast to the superficial appearances will itself come to grief with the discovery that the notion of an essence is only meaningful in *virtue* of the appearance that it is meant to explain away. (In terms of the ultimate *conceptual* categories of singularity, particularity and universality, this discovery would be equivalent to grasping the idea that the *singularity* of the underlying, non-perceivable substrate or substantial form is meaningful only in relation to something that can bear the *particular* qualities that constitutes its worldly appearance.) For Hegel it is the complex modern, but pre-Kantian, versions of substance metaphysics, like those of Spinoza and Leibniz, that bring out in the most developed way the inherently contradictory nature of this form of thought.

Book 3, The Doctrine of Concept, effects a shift from the Objective Logic of Books 1 and 2, to Subjective Logic, and metaphysically coincides with a shift to the modern subject-based category theory of Kant. Just as Kantian philosophy is founded on a conception of objectivity secured by conceptual coherence, Concept-logic commences with the concept of *concept* itself, with its moments of singularity, particularity and universality. While in the two books of objective logic, the movement had been between particular concepts, being, nothing, becoming etc., in the subjective logic, the conceptual relations are grasped at a meta-level, such that the concept *concept* treated in Chapter 1

of section 1 (Subjectivity) passes over into that of *judgment* in Chapter 2. It is important to grasp the basic contours of Hegel's treatment of judgment as it informs his subsequent treatment of inference.

Reprising an etymological point made by Hölderlin, Hegel notes that a judgment (*Urteil*) involves a separation (*Teilung*) of parts: in basic terms a predicate is said of some subject giving the judgment the grammatical form "*S is F*", but in *saying* "*S is F*", the judging subject affirms the *unity* existing between the parts. *S* and *F* are thus meant (1) to be diverse, but (2) to form a unity—a situation we are now familiar with in terms of the *Aufhebung* of parts in a whole. Hegel takes this as signaling two ways of thinking of the relation of subject and predicate in the judgment. One can take subject and predicate terms as self-subsistent entities that are *joined* in the judgment, or one can take the judgment itself as the primary unit that *splits* into subject and predicate terms. This in fact coincides with the two different ways in which logical relations have been conceived in the history of philosophy: the former represents the *term-logical* approach characteristic of Aristotle, while the latter represents the *propositional* approach characteristic of the Stoics and much recent philosophy. From the former point of view one thinks of the subject term as designating a substance, typically grasped as an instance of a kind, in which properties, designated by predicate terms, *inhere*. From the latter point of view, one thinks of predicate terms as abstract universals that *subsume* or are satisfied by entities to which the subject terms refer, an approach which conceives of the propositional content, in Stoic terminology—the *lecton*, the *what-is-said*—as having a primacy over the parts. Using a distinction from the Medievals, we can describe the first type of judgments as *de re* (about things) and the second as *de dicto* (about sayings). These alternative *joining* and *splitting* approaches can in turn be applied to the relationship of judgments within *inferences* or *sylogisms*. While it is more common for inferences to be thought of as *composed* of judgments which have their own *truth values*, the judgments themselves can be thought of as gaining their meaning via the role they play in inferences, parallel to the way that the *parts* of the judgment can be thought of as resulting from the judgment's *splitting*. Within recent semantic theory, Robert Brandom has argued for such an *inferentialist* analysis and has suggested this way of understanding Hegel's logic (Brandom 2014), a view that fits with Hegel's idea that the *sylogism* is the "truth of the judgment" (SL: 593). Thought of in terms of the framework of Kant's transcendental logic, Hegel's position would be akin to allowing inferences—sylogisms—a role in the determination of the transcendental content of judgments, a role that is not allowed in Kant.

As we have said, Hegel's logic is meant somehow to generate a content—to *produce* a type of ontology—and this comes into explicit focus with Hegel's puzzling claim in Book 3 concerning a syllogism that has become "concrete" and "full of content" that thereby has *necessary* existence (SL: 616–7). In contrast with Kant, Hegel seems to go beyond a transcendental deduction of the *formal* conditions of experience and thought and to a deduction of their *material* conditions. Traditionalists will here point to Hegel's allusions to the ontological proof (SL: 625) of medieval theology in which the *existence* of God is seen as necessitated by his concept—an argument undermined by Kant's criticism of the treatment of *existence* as a predicate. In Hegel's version, it is said, the objective existence that God achieves in the world is seen as necessitated by his essential self-consciousness. Non-traditional readings, in contrast, would have to interpret this aspect of Hegel's logic very differently. Brandom's inferentialist interpretation of Hegel, when joined to ideas taken from Hegel's treatment of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, suggests a way forward here.

The first thing to be emphasized here is that we shouldn't think of judgments and their contents as something like *mental* contents—subjective or psychological states of a thinker's mind. Such a psychologistic attitude was opposed by Hegel just as it was opposed by a figure as central to modern logic as Gottlob Frege. For Frege, thoughts are not mental, rather they are *abstract* entities like numbers, so the problem facing us is not how to go from mental contents to the concrete world, it is how to go from *abstract* to concrete ones. But here we must keep in mind Hegel's two-fold way of thinking about judgments, *de dicto* and *de re*, and while it is usual to think of the contents of *de dicto* judgments as abstract (here to think of the content as *propositional* is usual), some have thought of the contents of *de re* judgments as including *the thing* itself (the "*re*") that the judgment is about. (In fact Bertrand Russell had, at points in his career, entertained such an idea of *propositional content* itself.) Thus when Hegel characterizes some judgment structures (typically perception based judgments) as *judgments of existence* one might take the perceived thing *itself* as straightforwardly part of the content of the judgment. It is a concrete object, but not grasped as a concrete *simple*, but grasped in relation to what is judged *of it* in the predicate. And to the extent that *judgments* can be considered components of syllogisms, we might appreciate how syllogisms might have become contentful in a process that has culminated in the *concrete* syllogism of necessity.

If the concrete object of a *de re* judgment is effectively what had been under consideration in Chapter 2, Perception, in the *Phenomenology* (the thing with properties), we now might envisage where Hegel's thought is headed in these sections of the subjective logic. In the *Phenomenology* it turned out that the capacity for a subject to entertain objects of consciousness such as perceptual ones was that such a subject was capable of *self-consciousness*. It then turned out that to be capable of self-consciousness the subject had to exist in a world with other embodied subjects whose intentions it could recognize. It is here that we might pick up Robert Brandom's suggestion, following Sellars, that we should think of the existence of inferential processes or processes of reasoning as presupposing participation within social communicative interactions in which the making of an assertion is considered as a move in a language-game of the "giving and asking for reasons". In short, we may think of Hegel's syllogism of necessity, which constitutes the ground or "truth" of the earlier *formal* conception of syllogisms, as a type of inter-subjective practice embodying thought—a type of *sylogising* practice that is by necessity inter-subjective and recognitive. Formally considered

we might think of this syllogism as the logical schematization of the most *developed* form of recognition in which thinkers acknowledge others *as* free thinkers.

I have suggested that in the syllogism of necessity with which Hegel's treatment of inference terminates we get a glimpse of a type of contentful and dynamic rational process unfolding in the midst of the recognitive and communicative interactions between finite living and intentional beings. What we see here is a reprise of the conception of logos as an objective process running through the world as had been conceived by the ancient Stoics and neo-Platonists. But it is now embedded not simply in the world as such—in *nature*—but in objectivized *spirit*, in human communities of thinkers. We are now returned to the domain of *objectivity* that had characterized Books 1 and 2 of the *Science of Logic*, but we might expect such a return *from* subjectivity to have effected a change in *objectivity* as earlier understood.

To cross straight into a consideration of the objectivity of the human world of action and thought—spirit—would be to break the developmental pattern of the logic because thought about such a complex form of objective existence will presuppose thought about simpler forms. And so the starting point for the consideration of objectivity will again be that of the simple object as something immediately grasped by thought. But this object can now be developed with that elaborate conceptual apparatus that has emerged in the preceding section. Progression here will be from a naïve and immediate concept of an object as simple self-sufficient thing, a thing with its identity centered on itself, through the more complex idea of an object as grasped from within the interstices of physical and chemical thought, to the models of teleological and living systems. The *Logic* then transitions into a consideration of the "*adequate concept*, the objectively *true*, or the *true as such*" (SL: 670). This adequate concept is *the Idea*, which, after tracking through considerations of the living individual and theoretical and practical cognition, emerges as *the Absolute Idea*.

3.2 Hegel's *Encyclopaedic* System and its Expansions

As we have mentioned, Hegel's *Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences* was written as a teaching manual, various parts of which were later expanded upon in lecture courses devoted to specific parts of the system. The first part of the *Encyclopaedia* is essentially a condensed version of his earlier *Science of Logic*, considered above. We will pass over a consideration of this work to the next component of the *Encyclopaedia*, Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*.

3.2.1. Philosophy of Nature

Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* (first published as such in 1842, and based on §§245–376 from the 1830 *Encyclopaedia*, supplemented by material and student transcripts from Hegel's Berlin lectures) has often been damned by the contention that Hegel had simply *dismissed* the activity of the natural sciences, especially Newtonian science, as based upon the inadequacies of the Understanding, and in their place had tried to somehow deduce the natural world from philosophical first principles. Recently, however, defenses of Hegel's philosophy of science have started to emerge, especially from the side of Hegel's reformed metaphysical interpreters. Thus, it has been argued by Westphal (2008) for example, that Hegel's philosophy of nature actually represents a sophisticated attempt to think through epistemological assumptions that are presupposed by the development of Newton's theory. Defending Hegel's philosophy of science from a similar point of view, James Kreines (2008) has argued for the relevance of Hegel's logical categories for the biological sciences of his times. We won't here attempt to present such arguments, but before any such reassessment of Hegel's work here *could* be undertaken, the fundamental criticism raised above of a project that attempts to base a philosophy of nature on his logic rather than the empirical sciences must be addressed. Was not Hegel simply trying to pre-empt the work of empirical scientists by somehow attempting to anticipate the very *contents* of their discoveries from logical considerations alone?

This objection is often summed up under the slogan of "deducing Krug's pen", in that in 1801 the philosopher W.T. Krug had accused *Schelling's* idealist philosophy of nature of aiming to deduce the nature of all contingent phenomena, even that of the pen with which he, Krug, was writing his critique. Hegel responded to Krug's accusation in the following year, claiming that Krug had made the common mistake of conflating the understanding with reason, and treating the Absolute as something on the same level as finite things.

Hegel was, at this time, closely aligned with Schelling's views, and would separate his own views *from* Schelling's in subsequent years leading up to the writing of *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Nevertheless, Hegel clearly thought that his point held regardless of the relation of his own views to Schelling's as he was to make similar points against Krug in a remark added to the *Philosophy of Nature* from the Heidelberg and Berlin periods. While logic must not be restricted to the "form" of an externally given "matter", nevertheless,

it is the height of pointlessness to demand of the concept that it should explain ... construe or deduce these contingent products of nature. (PN: §250, remark. Krug is mentioned explicitly in a footnote at this point.)

The point is expanded upon further when it is said that it is

an error on the part of the philosophy of nature to attempt to face up to all phenomena; this is done in the finite sciences, where everything has to be reduced to general conceptions (hypotheses). In these sciences the empirical element is the sole confirmation of the hypothesis, so that everything has to be explained. (PN: §270, addition)

In keeping with the more general idea that that philosophy attempts to discern or recognize *concepts* in *representations* (*Vorstellungen*) or empirical appearances, philosophy of nature investigates the conceptual structures that are manifest in the products of the scientific work that is done on the basis of those appearances.

Traces of conceptual determination will certainly survive in the most particularized product, although they will not exhaust its nature. (PN: §250 remark)

Clearly, philosophy of nature is not in competition with the empirical natural sciences; it takes as its subject matter the results of those sciences in order to discover within them the particular ways in which the necessary categorial structures deduced in the logic are expressed.

In terms of topics treated, the *Philosophy of Nature* largely coincides with those treated in the third book of the *Science of Logic* when the logical processes and relations in question have returned to objectivity after the excursion into the *subjectivity* of formal logic at the outset of Book 3. In Mechanism Hegel had reconstructed a movement in thought from a primitive cosmology in which all objects are conceived in relation to a central object (the sun) that exemplifies objecthood *per se*, to a system of objects within which any such self-sufficient center has been eliminated. In this Newtonian world, that which gives order to the whole now has the ideality of law, but this is *itself* thought of as external to the system of objects.

After an Introduction, Section One of the *Philosophy of Nature*, Mechanics, expands on this progression through considerations of space and time, matter considered as the diversity of individual bodies distributed in space and time, and finally the idea of universal gravitation as the determinate concept of such corporeal matter realized as *idea* (PN: §270). In the Newtonian laws of mechanics, however, the unity of matter is still only *formal*, and in Section Two, Physics, the determinateness of form is now considered as *immanent within* such corporeal matter.

Matter has individuality to the extent that it is determined within itself by having being-for-self developed within it. It is through this determination that matter breaks away from gravity and manifests itself as implicitly self-determining. (PN: §273)

While Mechanics clearly reflects the more space-filling conception of matter dominant in British thought, Physics is consistent with the more dynamic continental European conception of matter originating in Leibniz with his idea of living forces. Within this framework, Hegel attempts to organize a vast array of areas of contemporary physical investigation including meteorology, theories of sound and heat, light and electricity up to and including *chemical* processes which stand on the threshold of Organic Physics, dealt with in Section Three. The study of organics represents a return to the consideration of the individual *body* with which Mechanics had started, but now considered as “infinite process in which the individuality determines itself as the *particularity or finitude* which it also negates, and returns into itself by re-establishing itself at the end of the process as the beginning”. The body is now “an *impregnated* and negative unity, which by relating itself to itself, has become essentially *self-centred and subjective*” (PN: §337). From such a conception, the first *body* to be considered is that of *the earth itself*, along with its history. Chapter Two moves to a consideration of the plant and Chapter Three, the animal organism.

From the point of view of the actual content of scientific theories and approaches that Hegel summarizes and locates within his system, his *Philosophy of Nature* is clearly a product of his time. Nevertheless, many of the underlying philosophical issues dealt with are still now far from settled. Thus, while Newtonian physics clearly became established in ways that made Leibniz’s dynamic physics seem obsolete as *empirical* theory, debate still goes on as to whether conceptions of space-time in post-Newtonian physics is to be conceived in Newtonian or Leibnizian ways.

3.2.2 Philosophy of Subjective and Objective Spirit

In the *Encyclopaedia*, *Philosophy of Nature* is followed by *Philosophy of Spirit* (*Geist*). Hegel’s usual triadic pattern when applied here results in sections devoted to the philosophies of subjective spirit, objective spirit, and absolute spirit. Philosophy of *subjective* spirit constitutes what is closest in Hegel’s philosophy to a philosophy of mind in the contemporary sense, while the philosophy of *objective* spirit concerns those objective patterns of social interaction and the cultural institutions

within which spirit is objectified in patterns of human life we have seen at work in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Within subjective spirit, we may anticipate that the first division, Anthropology, will follow on from topics with which *Philosophy of Nature* ends—the animal organism—and so it does. Thus here Hegel is concerned with what he terms “*Seele*”, “soul”—which seems to translate more the ancient Greek term, “psyche”—and hence the *mind-body* relation:

If soul and body are absolutely opposed to one another
as is maintained by the abstractive intellectual
consciousness,

Hegel comments,

then there is no possibility of any community between
them. The community was, however, recognized by
ancient metaphysics as an undeniable fact. (PN: § 389
add)

The *Seele* of Anthropology should therefore not be confused with the modern subjective conception of mind, as exemplified by Descartes and other early modern philosophers. Aristotle had conceived of the soul as the *form* of the body, not as a substance separate from that of the body, and had attributed lesser souls to animals and even plants. (Again, Aristotle’s notion of *substantial form* comes into view.) Concomitantly, in this section Hegel describes spirit as *sunk* in nature, and treats consciousness as largely limited to what now might be described as *sentient* or *phenomenal* consciousness alone—the feeling soul. *Consciousness* in the sense of the modern subject–object opposition only makes its appearance in the following second section, Phenomenology of Spirit, which, reprising key moments from the earlier book of that name, raises a problem for how we are to understand the relation of phenomenology and systematic philosophy: is it a *path* to it or *part* of it? Given that the recognitive approach to self-consciousness *presupposes* that potential self-consciousnesses are *in fact* embodied and located in the world, we would expect the mind as treated in Psychology to be no less embodied as the way in which it is conceived in Anthropology. What in fact distinguishes the mind of Psychology from that of Anthropology is its rational capacities, considered in terms that would now be described as normative rather than simply naturalistic, and this for Hegel clearly signals a difference in the way in which an actual psychological subject *relates* to his or her own body. The type of *abstractive* thinking found in Psychology does not, of course, as in mythical images of metempsychosis—a favorite trope of Platonists—involve the mind leaving the body. This would count for Hegel as a piece of mythical picture thinking—a *Vorstellung*. Rather, it involves a certain capacity of the psychological subject to suspend unreflected-upon endorsement of the *claims* made on behalf of his or her body, for example, to subject the evidence given by the senses to rational scrutiny.

Given the dialectical mode in which Hegel’s texts progress, as seen already in both *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Science of Logic*, we will expect the capacities examined in Psychology to ultimately depend upon those that come under consideration in the context of *objective* spirit. In this sense, we are witnessing within another mode, the type of progression seen in the movement in Phenomenology from shapes of consciousness to shapes of spirit. The internal *Phenomenology of Spirit* seems to play an important role in setting up this transition from Psychology to *Objective Spirit* (Williams 2007), but it might also be seen as crucial in relating the more cognitive dimensions of Psychology back to the theme of embodiment prominent in Anthropology (Nuzzo 2013a). Thus any *naturalistic analysis* is ultimately surpassed by a social and historical one, which *itself* cannot be understood as *anti-naturalistic*.

The philosophy of *subjective* spirit passes over into that of *objective spirit*, which concerns the objective patterns of social interaction and the cultural institutions within which spirit is objectified. The book entitled *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, published in 1821 as a textbook to accompany Hegel’s lectures at the University of Berlin, essentially corresponds to a more developed version of the philosophy of objective spirit and will be considered here.

Elements of the Philosophy of Right

The *Philosophy of Right* (as it is more commonly called) can be read as a political philosophy that stands independently of the system (Tunick 1992), despite the fact that Hegel intended it to be read against the background of the developing conceptual determinations of the *Logic*. The text proper starts from the conception of a singular willing subject (grasped from the point of view of its individual self-consciousness) as the bearer of *abstract* right. While this conception of the individual willing subject possessing some kind of fundamental rights was in fact the starting point of many modern political philosophies (such as that of Locke, for example) the fact that Hegel commences here does not testify to any ontological assumption that the consciously willing and right-bearing individual is the basic atom from which all society can be understood as constructed—an idea at the heart of standard social contract theories. Rather, this is simply the most immediate starting point of Hegel’s presentation and corresponds to analogous starting places of the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*. Just as the categories of the *Logic* develop in a way meant to demonstrate that what had at the start been conceived as simple is in fact only made determinate in virtue of its being a functional part of some larger structure or process, here too it is meant to be shown that any simple willing and right-bearing subject only gains its determinacy in virtue of a place it finds for itself in a larger social,

and ultimately historical, structure or process. Thus, even a contractual exchange (the minimal social interaction for contract theorists) is not to be thought simply as an occurrence consequent upon the existence of two beings with natural animal wants and some natural calculative rationality, as in Hobbes, say; rather, the system of interaction within which individual exchanges take place (the economy) will be treated holistically as a culturally-shaped form of social life within which the actual wants of individuals as well as their reasoning powers are given determinate forms. Hegel is well aware of the distinctive modernity of this form of social-life.

Here too it becomes apparent that Hegel, taking up themes from the Phenomenology, follows Fichte in treating property in terms of a *recognitive* analysis of the nature of such a right. A contractual exchange of commodities between two individuals itself involves an implicit act of recognition in as much as each, in giving something to the other in exchange for what they want, is thereby recognizing that other as a proprietor of that thing, or, more properly, of the inalienable *value* attaching to it (PR: §§72–81). By contrast, such proprietorship would be *denied* rather than recognised in fraud or theft—forms of wrong (*Unrecht*) in which right is negated rather than acknowledged or posited (§§82–93). Thus what differentiates property from mere *possession* is that it is grounded in a relation of reciprocal recognition between two willing subjects (§71 and remark). Moreover, it is in the exchange relation that we can see what it means for Hegel for individual subjects to share a *common will*—an idea which will have important implications with respect to the difference of Hegel’s conception of the state from that of Rousseau. Such an interactive constitution of the common will means that for Hegel that the identity among wills is achieved *because of* not *in spite of* co-existing differences between the particular wills of the subjects involved: while contracting individuals both will *the same* exchange, at a more concrete level, they do so with different ends in mind. Each wants something different *from* the exchange. Without this difference, the type of absorption of individual subjects into collective *substance* of the type of Hegel worries about in relation to Spinoza would occur (§258 remark).

Hegel passes from the abstractly individualistic frame of Abstract Right to the social determinacies of *Sittlichkeit* or Ethical Life (PR: §142) via considerations first of *wrong*, the negation of right, (§§82–96) and the punishment that such wrong entails the negation of wrong, and hence the “negation of the negation” of the original right (§§97–104), and then of *morality*, conceived more or less as an internalisation of the external legal relations presupposed by punishment. Consideration of Hegel’s version of the retributivist approach to punishment affords a good example of his use of the logic of negation. In punishing the criminal the state makes it clear to its members that it is the acknowledgment of right *per se* that is essential to developed social life: the significance of acknowledging another’s right in the contractual exchange cannot be, as it at first might have appeared to the participants, simply that of an instrumental means by which each gets what he or she wants from the other.

Hegel’s treatment of punishment also brings out the continuity of his way of conceiving of the structure and dynamics of the social world with that of Kant, as Kant too, in his *Metaphysics of Morals* had employed the idea of the state’s punitive action as a *negating* of the original criminal act. Kant’s idea, conceived on the model of the physical principle of action and reaction, was structured by the category of community or reciprocal interaction, and was conceived as involving what he called *real opposition*. Such an idea of opposed dynamic forces seems to form something of a model for Hegel’s idea of contradiction and the starting point for his conception of reciprocal recognition. Nevertheless, clearly Hegel articulates the structures of recognition in more complex ways than those derivable from Kant’s category of community.

First of all, in Hegel’s analysis of *Sittlichkeit* the type of sociality found in the market-based civil society is to be understood as dependent upon and in contrastive opposition with the more immediate form found in the institution of the family: a form of sociality mediated by a quasi-natural inter-subjective recognition rooted in sentiment and feeling—love (PR: §§ 158–60). (This dependence shows how *anthropological* determinations do not simply disappear with the development of more *psychological* ones—they are *preserved* as well as *negated* as in the pattern of what is *aufgehoben*. It also shows the mutual dependence of the determinations of the *singularity* of the atomistic subjects of civil society and their *particularity* as members (parts) of holistically conceived families.) Here Hegel seems to have extended Fichte’s legally characterized notion of recognition into the types of human inter-subjectivity earlier broached by Hölderlin and the romantics. In the family the particularity of each individual tends to be absorbed into the social unit (one is a *part of* one’s family), giving this manifestation of *Sittlichkeit* a one-sidedness that is the inverse of that found in market relations in which participants grasp themselves in the first instance as *singular* [*einzel*]*n* self-identical individuals who *then* enter into relationships that are external to them.

These two opposite but interlocking principles of social existence provide the basic structures in terms of which the component parts of the modern state are articulated and understood. As both contribute particular characteristics to the subjects involved in them, part of the problem for the rational state will be to ensure that each of these two principles mediates the other, each thereby mitigating the *one-sidedness* of the other. Thus, individuals who encounter each other in the external relations of the market place and who have their subjectivity shaped by such relations also belong to families where they are subject to opposed influences. Moreover, even within the ensemble of production and exchange mechanisms of civil society individuals will belong to particular *estates* (the agricultural estate, that of trade and industry, and the *universal* estate of civil servants (PR: §§199–208)), whose internal forms of sociality will show family-like features.

Although the actual details of Hegel's mapping of the categorical structures of the *Logic* onto the *Philosophy of Right* are far from clear, the general motivation is apparent. Hegel's logical categories can be read as an attempt to provide a schematic account of the material (rather than formal) conditions required for developed self-consciousness for whom rationality and freedom are maximized. Thus we might regard the various syllogisms of Hegel's *Subjective Logic* as attempts to chart the skeletal structures of those different types of recognitive inter-subjectivity necessary to sustain various aspects of rational cognitive and conative functioning (self-consciousness). From this perspective, we might see his logical schematisation of the modern rational state as a way of displaying just those sorts of mediating institutions that a state must provide if it is to answer Rousseau's question of the form of association needed for the formation and expression of the *general will*.

Concretely, for Hegel it is representation of the estates within the legislative bodies that is to achieve this (PR: §§301–14). As the estates of civil society group their members according to their common interests, and as the deputies elected from the estates to the legislative bodies give voice to those interests within the deliberative processes of legislation, the outcome of this process might give expression to the general interest. But Hegel's republicanism is here balanced by his invocation of the familial principle: such representative bodies can only provide the *content* of the legislation to a *constitutional monarch* who must add to it the form of the royal decree—an individual “I will ...” (§§275–81). To declare that for Hegel the monarch plays only a symbolic role here is to miss the fundamentally idealist complexion of his political philosophy. The expression of the general will in legislation cannot be thought of as an outcome of some quasi-mechanical process: it must be *willed*. If legislation is to express the general will, citizens must recognize it as expressing *their* wills; and this means, recognising it *as* willed. The monarch's explicit “I will” is thus needed to close this recognitive circle, lest legislation look like a mechanical compromise resulting from a clash of contingent interests, and so as actively *willed* by nobody. Thus while Hegel is critical of standard social contract theories, his own conception of the state is still clearly a complicated transformation of those of Rousseau and Kant.

Perhaps one of the most influential parts of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* concerns his analysis of the contradictions of the unfettered capitalist economy. On the one hand, Hegel agreed with Adam Smith that the interlinking of productive activities allowed by the modern market meant that “subjective selfishness” turned into a “contribution towards the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else” (PR: §199). But this did not mean that he accepted Smith's idea that this “general plenty” produced thereby *diffused* (or “trickled down”) though the rest of society. From within the type of consciousness generated within civil society, in which individuals are grasped as *bearers of rights* abstracted from the particular concrete relationships to which they belong, Smithean optimism may seem justified. But this simply attests to the one-sidedness of this type of abstract thought, and the need for it to be mediated by the type of consciousness based in the family in which individuals are grasped in terms of the way they *belong* to the social body. In fact, the unfettered operation of the market *produces* a class caught in a spiral of poverty. Starting from this analysis, Marx later used it as evidence of the need to abolish the individual proprietorial rights at the heart of Hegel's civil society and socialise the means of production. Hegel, however, did not draw this conclusion. His conception of the exchange contract as a form of recognition that played an essential role within the state's capacity to provide the conditions for the existence of rational and free-willing subjects would certainly prevent such a move. Rather, the economy was to be contained within an over-arching institutional framework of the state, and its social effects offset by welfarist intervention. Some of Hegel's most telling criticisms of the unmediated effects of modern civil society concern those on the psychological lives of individuals. Recently, an approach to social reality with Hegelian provenance that uses the notion of recognition to articulate such pathologies has been developed by Axel Honneth (2010), testifying to the continuing relevance of Hegel's analyses.

Philosophy of History

The final 20 paragraphs of the *Philosophy of Right* (and the final 5 paragraphs of objective spirit section of the *Encyclopaedia*) are devoted to *world history* (*die Weltgeschichte*), and they also coincide with the point of transition from objective to *absolute* spirit. We have already seen the relevance of historical issues for Hegel in the context of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, such that a series of different forms of objective spirit can be grasped in terms of the degree to which they enable the development of a universalizable self-consciousness capable of rationality and freedom. Hegel was to enlarge on these ideas in a lecture series given five times during his Berlin period, and it was *via* the text assembled on the basis of these lectures by his son Karl, that many readers would be introduced to Hegel's ideas after his death.

World history is made up of the histories of *particular* peoples within which spirit assumes some “particular principle on the lines of which it must run through a development of its consciousness and its actuality” (PM: §548). Just the same dialectic that we have first seen operative among shapes of consciousness in the *Phenomenology* and among categories or thought-determinations in the *Logic* can be observed here. An historical community *acts* on the principle that informs its social life, the experience and memory of this action and the consequences it brings—a memory encoded in the stories that circulate in the community—results in this principle becoming available for the self-consciousness of the community, thus breaking the *immediacy* of its operation. This loss of immediacy brings about the decline of that community but gives rise to the principle of a new community:

in rendering itself objective and making this its being an object of thought, [spirit] on the one hand destroys the determinate form of its being, and on the other hand gains a comprehension of the universal element which it involves, and thereby gives a new form to its inherent principle ... [which] has risen into another, and in fact a higher principle. (PWH: 81)

This dialectic linking concrete communities into a developmental narrative which shows

the path of liberation for the spiritual substance, the deed by which the absolute final aim of the world is realized in it, and the merely implicit mind achieves consciousness and self-consciousness. (PM: §549)

It is a dialectic, however, which only passes through *some* communities. Hegel's is a clearly *Eurocentric* account of history.

It is thus that "the analysis of the successive grades [of universal history] in their abstract form belongs to logic" (PWH: 56), but once more, it must be stressed that, as with philosophy of nature, philosophy of history is not meant to somehow magically *deduce* actual empirical historical phenomena, like Krug's pen; rather, it takes the results of actual empirical history as its material and attempts to find exemplified within this material the sorts of categorial progressions of the logic. Thus the activity of the philosophical historian presupposes that of "original" and "reflective" historians (PWH: 1-8). The actual world is full of contingencies from which empirical historians will have already abstracted in constructing their narratives, for example, when writing from particular *national* perspectives. To grasp history *philosophically*, however, will be to grasp it from *the perspective of world-history* itself, and this provides the transition to *absolute* spirit, as world history will understood in terms of the manifestation of what from a religious perspective is called "God", or from a philosophical perspective, "reason". Hegel clearly thinks that there is a way of cognitively relating to history in a way that goes beyond the standpoint of consciousness and the understanding—the standpoint of what we now think of as informing scientific history. From the perspective of consciousness history is something that stands over against me *qua* something known, but from the standpoint of *self-consciousness* I grasp this history as the history of that which contributes to *me*, *qua* rational and free being.

3.2.3 Philosophy of Absolute Spirit

The subject matter of the final 25 paragraphs of the *Encyclopaedia Philosophy of Spirit*, Absolute Spirit, came to be expanded massively into the contents of three different lectures series on philosophy of art, religion, and history of philosophy given multiple times during Hegel's decade in Berlin. Assembled and published in the years immediately following his death, these were the works through which Hegel was to become known as perhaps the most significant synoptic theorist of these cultural phenomena. Rather than to attempt to capture the richness of his thought here in a few paragraphs, which would be bound to be futile, I will simply try to allude to how this material is meant to draw upon the conceptual resources noted so far.

Art

Hegel was writing in a time of intense development of ideas about the arts. Kant had treated aesthetic experience largely in relation to the experience of the beauty of nature, but for Hegel aesthetics becomes primarily about *art*. The reason for this is simple: art is an objective medium in which a community collectively reflects upon itself, and the art of historical peoples is to be understood as the attempt to bring before the consciousnesses of its members the totality of what is. It is *as art* that "consciousness of the Absolute first takes shape" (PM: §556). The peculiarity of art lie in the *sensuousness* of the medium in which its content is objectified.

In the 1790s, Friedrich Schiller and Friedrich Schlegel had given aesthetics an historical dimension, distinguishing the forms of ancient and modern art in terms of the contrasts naïve-sentimental and classical-romantic respectively. Hegel adopts Schlegel's terminology to distinguish as *classical* the art that thrived in the Greek and Roman worlds from the *romantic* art of post-classical times. Again, the romantic or modern here will be characterized by the depth of a form of individual *subjective* consciousness that is largely missing in antiquity. But those in Greek antiquity, where *psychological* determinations were closer to *anthropological* ones, had lived with a comfortable felt unity between spirit and body and between the individual and society. A characteristic of the Greeks was their *Heimatlichkeit*—their collective feeling of being *at home* in the world as they were each at home in their bodies. Modern subjectivity is thereby purchased as the expense of a sense of *abstraction* and *alienation* from the actual world and from the self—a consequence of the way the modern subject has become related to his or her body in a different way.

Hegel, influenced by the work of a former colleague, the Heidelberg philologist Friedrich Creuzer, adds to Schlegel's categorization of art forms by positing a further category of *symbolic* art, characterizing the material cultures of ancient Eastern civilizations such as Persia, India and Egypt.

The symbolic art of pantheistic religions of the East used *natural elements* to symbolize the gods of their cultures: Zoroastrianism had taken light, for example, to symbolize the divine (Aes I: 325), and animal worship was found in the Egyptians (Aes I: 357). But such actual *things* had to be distinguished from what was meant to be symbolized by them, so violence had to be done to such natural forms in attempts to represent the absolute—such cultural products thus becoming “bizarre, grotesque, and tasteless” (Aes I: 77). This, however, undermined their initial function, and the Greeks were able to offer a dialectical solution to this contradiction. They gave expression to the Absolute or the Idea by taking as its material the specifically *human form*, but only on condition of its being rendered “exempt from all the deficiency of the purely sensuous and from the contingent finitude of the phenomenal world”. But even as idealized in Greek sculpture, say, the represented Greek god is still an object of “naïve intuition and sensuous imagination” (Aes I: 77–8), and as such the classical gods contained the germ of their own decline as they could not evade

the finitudes incidental to anthropomorphism [which]
pervert the gods into the reverse of what constitutes
the essence of the substantial and Divine (Aes I: 502–4)

A new form of art will be needed to resolve these contradictions, and this is provided by romantic art. But the *material* for this form will not come from within art itself. While Greek art can be understood as simultaneously belonging to aesthetic and religious realms, romantic art results from a fission within the symbolic realm of what in the *Phenomenology* Hegel had treated as a single category, Art-Religion. The transition from classical art to romantic art represents both a liberation of art from religion and of religion from art and the sensuous. Thus Christianity, whose rituals centered around the myth of God becoming man in the person of Jesus, had avoided the type of reliance on the beautiful productions of art in the way that characterized Greek religions. The shift from classical to romantic art, then, represents a broader shift between a culture whose final authority was an aesthetic one and a culture in which this authority was handed over to religion, and thus represents a shift in the authoritativeness of different cognitive forms. This loss of ultimate authority is the meaning of Hegel’s often misunderstood thesis of *the death of art*.

For further discussion, see the entry on [Hegel’s aesthetics](#).

Religion

It is well known that after Hegel’s death in 1831, his followers soon split into left, centre and right factions over the issue of religion. A dispute over an appropriately Hegelian philosophical attitude to religion had been sparked by the publication in 1835–6 of David Strauss’s *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*—the conservative *right* claiming that Hegelianism reflected Christian orthodoxy, the *left* seeing it as a humanistic doctrine concerning the historical emancipation of mankind. In fact the implications of Hegel’s philosophy for religious belief had been contentious since his rise to prominence in the 1820s. While officially declaring that philosophy and religion had the same *content*—God—Hegel claimed that the *conceptual* form of philosophy dealt with this concept in a more developed way than that which was achievable in the imagistic representational form of religion. Many opponents were suspicious that the concept of God was emptied of its proper meaning in the process of Hegel’s philosophical translations and Hegel was suspected by some of pantheism or atheism. Ultimately, then, the source of the corrosive effects of Hegel’s philosophy on religion indeed could appear to be the insistence that the content of religious belief, like everything else, be grounded on rational, in fact *logical*, considerations—the logical coherence of the system of philosophy itself—rather than on anything like revelation.

In the writings he had produced in the 1790s Hegel had shown a clear attraction to the type of folk art-religions of ancient Greece in contrast to Christianity, whose other-worldly doctrines did not reflect the kind of *Heimatlichkeit* he valued in the ancient world, and it is common to see Hegel’s later embrace of the Christianity he described as “the consummate religion” as an expression of a cultural and political conservatism of his later years. This under-estimates the complexity of Hegel’s evolving views on both philosophy and religion, however. The limitations of Greek *at-homeness* in the world had to do with the inability of Greek life and thought to sustain that dimension of human existence that is reflected in the category of *singularity* of the subject. The fate of Socrates had thus represented the ultimate incompatibility with the Greek form of life itself of the type of individual, reflective individual who could reflectively bring *any* belief into question and take a stand against convention. Similar incompatibilities could be seen reflected in Greek tragedies such as *Antigone*.

With the decline of the Greek world and the rise of the Roman one, movements such as Stoicism and Christianity would come to give expression to an individual point of view, but under the social conditions of Rome or the Middle Ages such a subjective point of view could only be an alienated one attracted to what, in contrast to Greek concreteness, would be seen as abstractions. Prior to the modern world there would be no *real* place in either everyday life or in philosophical culture for any *non*-alienated versions of the reflective or subjective position that had first emerged with Socrates—no form of life in which this individual dimension of human subjectivity *could be* at home. But Christianity marked a type of advance over Stoicism in that its doctrines of the nature of a good life had a this worldly *exemplar*. Thus in describing the doctrine of the Stoic sage, Hegel seemed fond of quoting Cicero’s dictum that *nobody can say who this sage is* (LHP II: 250–1, 256). It was the abstractness of the Stoic’s conception of the good man that was answered by the new religious cult centred on the life of the historical Christ.

In this sense Christianity marked a definite advance over the more intuitively based religious cults to which Hegel had been attracted in his youth, but it would only be in the modern world that the content of the core ideas of Christianity could be given proper expression. Thus Hegel treats medieval Catholicism as still caught in the abstractions of a transcendent realm and as caught up in a type of literal reading of this religion's *Vorstellungen*—its pictures. These need to become conceptualized, and this happens under modern Protestantism, and this, for Hegel, requires a type of demythologization of the religious content handed down from the past. Christ must somehow come to stand as an example of the human kind in general, which is the ultimate bearer of the status of being the *son of God*. Once more, it is the purported *singularity* of the category *son of God* that must be brought back into relation to the *universality* of the human *genus*. It is the nature of this result that divided Hegel's followers into their right and left camps. The understanding of what Hegel means by the concept *religion* in turn becomes tied to understanding what he means by *philosophy*. Appropriately the *Philosophy of Religion* thus passes over into the final form of *Absolute Spirit*, Philosophy—a science that is the “unity of Art and Religion” (PM: §572). The mere six paragraphs devoted to this science in the *Encyclopaedia* and dealing almost exclusively with the relation of philosophy to religion were to be expanded into the massive posthumously published three volumes on the (philosophical) history of philosophy based on various sources including student transcripts for his lecture series given in Berlin.

History of Philosophy

In Hegel's time, the idea that philosophy *had* a historical development had only recently come into focus. Both Fichte and Schelling had discussed the idea of a history of reason following Kant's allusion to such a notion in the closing pages of *Critique of Pure Reason*, and systematic approaches to the history of philosophy had emerged like that of W.G. Tennemann, who presupposed a type of Kantian framework. Clearly Hegel's history of philosophy would be a present-centered one, in which the philosophical narrative would reveal a development up to the point represented by his own philosophy as *its* culmination. It is thus predictably Eurocentric: philosophy “commences in the West” because the West is where “this freedom of self-consciousness first comes forth” (LHP I: 99). There is an important caveat to add here, however. Philosophy is often identified with the capacity for *abstract* thought, and this is not confined to Europe and its history. Rather, it is typical of *eastern* cultures like those of India and China. As we have seen in the context of *art*, Hegel identifies Greek culture with a type of at-homeness in the world—what we might think of as the *opposite* of a tendency to abstraction and its typical attraction to the *transcendent* or *other-worldly*.

Greek philosophy, and so *philosophy itself*, starts with Thales and Ionian natural philosophy. When Thales chooses *water* as the “the principle and substance of all that is” (LHP I: 175) he has abstracted the *concept* water from the stuff immediately encountered in puddles and so on. Subsequent attempts to specify what it is that underlies all things show influences of eastern abstraction as in Pythagoras's numericism, which is static and “destitute of process or dialectic” (LHP I: 212) but later thinkers such as Zeno and Heraclitus grasp that which is at the heart of things in more dynamic ways. This type of dialectical thought which grasps the *unity* of opposites, familiar from the *Phenomenology* and the *Logic*, comes to fruition in Plato's dialogue *Parmenides* (LHP I: 261). What we are witnessing here, of course, is meant to be a progression that in some sense mirrors the progression of categories in Hegel's own *Logic*, but this progression of objective *content* gets joined to another dynamic with the appearance of Socrates.

Socrates was more than a philosopher: he was a “world-historical person”—a “main turning-point [*Hauptwendepunkt*] of spirit on itself” exhibited itself in his philosophical thought (LHP I: 384). In short, Socrates had added a *subjective dimension* to the otherwise natural moral lives of Athenian citizens, in that he had challenged them to find the principles not of worldly things but of *their own actions*, and challenged them to find these within the resources of *their own individual consciousnesses*.

In him we see pre-eminently the inwardness of
consciousness that in an anthropological way existed in
the first instance in him and became later on a usual
thing. (LHP I: 391)

With this we see “moral substance [*Sittlichkeit*] turn into reflective morality [*Moralität*]” and “the reflection of consciousness into itself”. “The spirit of the world here begins to turn, a turn that was later carried to its completion” (LHP I: 407). This completion would be only achieved in modernity because, as we have seen, Socrates's challenging of convention in terms of resources taken from individual consciousness itself was incompatible with the immediacy of Greek *Sittlichkeit*.

Plato and, especially Aristotle, represent the pinnacle of ancient philosophy, but this philosophy, no matter how great, represents *its time*, that is, the time of the Greek form of spirit, raised to the level of thought. Neither Plato nor Aristotle can break free in thought from the contradiction between the conception of autonomous subjectivity represented by Socrates and the essential collectivity of Greek culture. Classical Greek philosophy will succumb in the same way that the Greek polis succumbs to its own internal contradictions, and what will eventually replace it will be a type of philosophizing constrained within the doctrinal constraints of the new religion, Christianity. But Christianity, as we have seen, gives representation to a solution to the problem of subjectivity encountered in the form of Socrates.

Philosophy proper only thrives under conditions of at-homeness in the world and such conditions obtained in neither the Roman nor medieval world. Hegel then sees both periods of philosophy as effectively marking time, and it is only in the modern world that once more develops. What modern philosophy will reflect is the universalization of the type of subjectivity we have seen represented by Socrates in the Greek polis and Jesus in the Christian religious community. Strangely, Hegel nominates two very antithetic figures as marking the onset of modern philosophy, Francis Bacon and the German Christian mystic, Jacob Böhme (LHP III: 170–216). In the 1825–6 lectures, from there Hegel traces the path of modern philosophy through three phases: a first period of metaphysics comprising Descartes, Spinoza and Malebranche; a second treating Locke, Leibniz and others; and the *recent* philosophies of Kant, Fichte, Jacobi and Schelling. Of course the perspective from which this narrative has been written is the absent *final* stage within this sequence—that represented by Hegel himself. Hegel concludes the lectures with the claim that he has

tried to exhibit their (this series of spiritual configurations) necessary procession out of one another, so that each philosophy necessarily presupposes the one preceding it. Our standpoint is the cognition of spirit, the knowledge of the idea as spirit, as absolute spirit, which as absolute opposes itself to another spirit, to the finite spirit. To recognize that absolute spirit can be *for it* is this finite spirit's principle and vocation.